China

Southeast in Winter

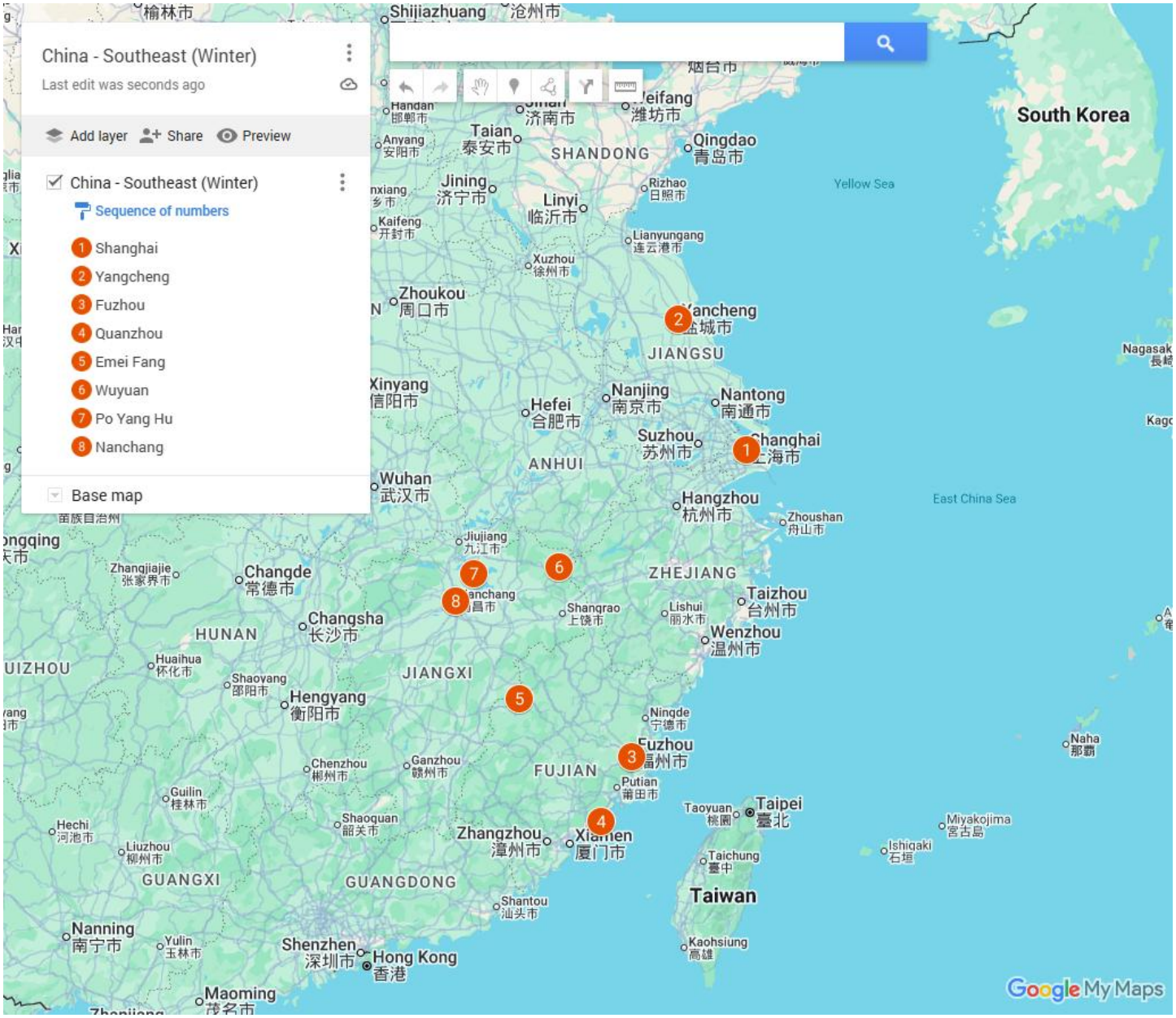


Siberian Crane by Rob Williams

Winter in south-east China offers a rich kaleidoscope of impressive and localised bird specialities, including several of the world's most spectacular cranes. Foremost among these cranes, poetically referred to as 'the birds of heaven', will be the elegant Siberian Crane, one of the rarest cranes on earth. During this tour, we will also be looking for an impressive supporting cast of exciting birds that include the critically endangered Spoon-billed Sandpiper, which has recently been found to winter in this area, the rare Scaly-sided Merganser, thousands of Swan Geese, Falcated Duck, Baikal Teal, Oriental Stork, Saunders's Gull, Black-faced Spoonbill, Reed Parrotbill, Pied Falconet and Elliot's Pheasant.

Itinerary & Map

Day 1	**Arrival in Shanghai, transfer to Yancheng**
Day 2	**Yancheng area**
Day 3	**Yancheng to Shanghai area**
Day 4	**Shanghai; flight to Fuzhou**
Day 5	**Fuzhou Forest Park, transfer to Quanzhou area**
Day 6	**Weitou Bay Wetlands**
Day 7	**Quanzhou to Emei Feng**
Day 8	**Emei Feng & surrounds**
Day 9	**Emei Feng to Wuyuan**
Day 10	**Wuyuan & surrounds**
Day 11	**Wuyuan to Po Yang Hu**
Days 12 & 13	**Po Yang Hu & surrounds**
Day 14	**Po Yang Hu to Nanchang; flight to Shanghai**
Day 15	**Final departure**


China - Southeast (Winter)
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China - Southeast (Winter)
Sequence of numbers
1 Shanghai
2 Yangcheng
3 Fuzhou
4 Quanzhou
5 Emei Fang
6 Wuyuan
7 Po Yang Hu
8 Nanchang
Base map
South Korea
Yellow Sea
East China Sea
SHANDONG
JIANGSU
ANHUI
ZHEJIANG
JIANGXI
HUNAN
FUJIAN
GUANGXI
GUANGDONG
Taiwan
Shijiazhuang
Taian
Qingdao
Jining
Linyi
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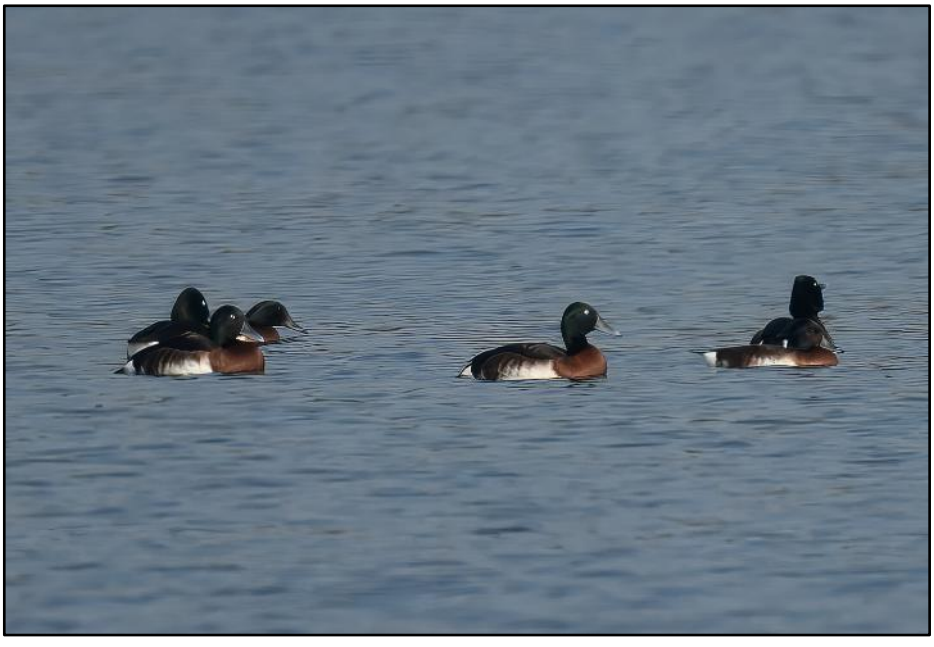
Birding sites in detail

Yancheng area. We have time to explore the vast complex of reedbeds, saltpans and lagoons. Surprisingly, birders have only recently been attracted to this area despite it hosting hundreds of Red-crowned Cranes. Silt carried by the Yangtze River is adding to the coastline, while numerous fishponds have been created by the locals. The combination of two environmental problems has turned out well for the birds at least. While we can certainly expect to see several Red-crowned and Common Cranes, we have a chance of finding a straggling Hooded or Sandhill amongst them. Should we be particularly lucky, we may come across an over-wintering Saunders's Gull.



Reed Parrotbill by Erik Forsyth

Turning our attention to the large reedbeds, we shall diligently search for the cryptic Eurasian Bittern, but we shall pay particular attention to finding the decorated Reed Parrotbill (which often give their location away by the sound of their hefty mandibles cracking the dry reed stems!). Pallas's Reed Bunting can be numerous, while small numbers of Ochre-rumped Bunting should also make an appearance. As one might expect, wildfowl make up most of the bird mass present, with huge numbers wintering in this slightly warmer region. We have plenty of time to scope through flocks of Tundra Bean Goose, the ever-popular and undeniably beautiful Falcated Duck, the rare Baikal Teal, Chinese Spot-billed Duck, the outrageous Smew and Common Merganser.



Baer's Pochard by Rob Williams

While targeting some of the very impressive and desirable species mentioned above, we shall also rack up a list of commoner, but no less interesting species such as Eastern Marsh and Hen Harriers, Japanese Buzzard, Kentish Plover, Green Sandpiper, Red-flanked Bluetail, Daurian Redstart, Chinese Blackbird, near-endemic Chinese Grey Shrike, White-cheeked Starling and both Black-faced and Chestnut-eared Buntings.

Fuzhou Forest Park. This park, with its myriad of stone pathways and beautiful forested gorges, houses an impressive suite of interesting

species, including the localised, White-necklaced Partridge, Chestnut Bulbul, busy flocks of Indochinese Yuhina, Great Barbet, Slaty-backed Forktail, Scarlet and Grey-chinned Minivets, Fork-tailed Sunbird, Collared Finchbill, Pale-headed Woodpecker and the Chinese endemic Yellow-bellied Tit.



Cabot's Tragopan by Rob Williams

Minjiang Estuary. We'll make a short stop here to search for a handful of specialities such as the endangered, Black-faced Spoonbill, Dalmatian Pelican, and Saunders's Gull, one of the world's rarest gulls. Although these species will be the primary focus during our visit, there is also a wide variety of gulls, terns, and other migrant waders to keep us entertained during our visit.

Weitou Bay Wetlands. We head to this small series of mud flats for the increasingly critically endangered Spoon-billed Sandpiper. This enigmatic species has reliably overwintered here for several years with up to five individuals being recorded. Given first-class state protection in China, it is primarily further south in Myanmar that subsistence hunting continues to push the species ever closer to extinction.

The mudflats are also home to several other waders of great concern such as Great Knot and Saunders's Gull. We should also find Greater and Siberian Sand Plovers, the odd Broad-billed Sandpiper and Red-necked Stint, as well as Pacific Golden Plover and Kentish Plovers.



Spoon-billed Sandpiper by Rob Williams

Emei Feng & surrounds. Situated in the Wuyishan Mountain Range that straddle the Jiangxi and the Fujian border, this UNESCO World Heritage Site is well known for its high mountain peaks. Apart from being an area of outstanding natural beauty, it also contains probably the only remaining large tract of pristine forest in southern China.

At the park entrance, a river flows through a narrow valley towards the headquarters, and we will scan this waterway for the very attractive Crested Kingfisher and sprightly Brown Dipper. The hills



Chinese Grey Shrike by Rob Williams

are covered with pristine forest supporting the impressive, Red-billed Blue Magpie, Barred Cuckoo-Dove, Square-tailed Drongo-Cuckoo, migrant Crested Buntings in overgrown areas, the sneaky Lesser Shortwing, Chestnut-bellied Rock Thrush and Collared Finchbill. An imitation of Asian Barred Owlet should attract this often-diurnal species, as well as mobbing flock species such as the Chinese endemic Yellow-bellied Tit, Coal Tit, Grey-cheeked Fulvetta, Eurasian Jay and Chestnut-vented Nuthatch. The delightful Little Forktail is also possible along the forest streams, and we will watch overhead for raptors that include Mountain Hawk-Eagle and the sleek Besra. This will also be our best opportunity for the scarce Elliot's Pheasant. From the reserve headquarters, the road continues winding steeply upwards past a variety of cultivated areas and large stands of mature bamboo towards the top of the forested mountaintop, reaching a height of over 2 000 meters in elevation.

Mixed flocks should produce species such as Ferruginous Flycatcher, Green Shrike-Babbler, Yellow-browed Tit, Grey-chinned Minivet and Brown Bullfinch. The endangered Stump-tailed Macaque also resides in the reserve as does the agile Tufted Deer. Silver Pheasant can sometimes be seen feeding along the forest edge, while further time birding in the bamboo zone should produce Chinese Bamboo Partridge, the vocal but inconspicuous Rufous-faced Warbler, Chestnut Bulbul, and active groups of Vinous-throated Parrotbill.

Near the summit Rosy Pipit, Buff-throated Warbler, Streak-throated Fulvetta, White-browed Shrike-Babbler, Yellow-cheeked Tit and Russet Bush Warbler are regular, while Asian Martins are often seen near the cliff faces along the track. Pygmy Cupwing (Wren-Babbler) and Spotted Elachura are two furtive but vocal species that will likely take some persistence to actually see. Other birds we should encounter here include Small Niltava, Grey Treepie, Mountain Bulbul, Streak-breasted Scimitar Babbler, Black-chinned Yuhina, Rufus-capped Babbler and several other warbler species including Blyth's Leaf, Chestnut-crowned, Bianchi's and White-spectacled Warblers. We will scan tall trees to locate the vocal Great Barbet and Bay Woodpecker, but it will take a great dose of luck to see the poorly known, White-necklaced Partridge.



Masked Laughingthrush by Clayton Burne

Wuyuan. This picturesque small town is situated in the north-eastern corner



Scaly-sided Merganser by Clayton Burne

of Jiangxi Province. Here we will take some time staking out the tiny Pied Falconet, a localised but strikingly patterned raptor, before spending time birding for specialities that include the ornately patterned Mandarin Duck, Masked Laughingthrush, Red-billed Starling and migrant thrushes such as Dusky, Neumann's, Pale and Grey-backed. Several species of migratory buntings are possible in this area, including Yellow-throated, Yellow-browed, Meadow and the scarce Tristram's.

Following the serene Le An River through the forest-covered mountains of Wuyuan, our primary target will be to locate the critically endangered Scaly-sided Merganser. Up to sixty birds overwinter in this area, feeding in the calm water areas along the gravel banks. Wintering populations of Long-billed Plover, White-crowned Forktail and confiding Brown Crakes will also be on the agenda. Additional birding through the dense bamboo and steep forested slopes dotted with local villages allow us chances for Dusky Fulvetta, Greater Necklaced and White-browed Laughingthrushes, the retiring Spot-breasted Scimitar Babbler, Rufous-capped Babbler, Fork-tailed Sunbird, Crested Serpent Eagle, responsive Red-billed Leiothrix, and both Grey-headed and the elusive Short-tailed Parrotbill.



Falcated Duck by Rob Williams

Migrant congregations of Yellow-billed Grosbeak are regular in this area, as are groups of Black-collared Starling, Hwamei, with their amazing melodic song, and with some luck on our side, perhaps a flock of Japanese Waxwings.

Po Yang Hu & surrounds. The vast complex of lakes and marshes of Po Yang Hu are one of the world's greatest wetland reserves, hosting critical populations of some of Asia's rarest migrants. Foremost among these are several species of elegant

cranes, as well as hundreds of thousands of individual waterfowl, waders and passerines escaping the harsh winter conditions further north.



Eurasian Bittern by Clayton Burne

Even before we have finished our breakfast, we might have already seen our first Hooded, Common, and majestic White-naped Cranes along the roadside wetlands! Exploring the surroundings through a series of canals, we will be amongst large congregations of geese that include Greylag, Greater and infrequent Lesser White-fronted, Tundra and the scarcer Taiga Bean Goose. We will also listen for the unique bill clapping of Oriental Stork and could potentially find well over half the world's population of this endangered species during our visit! The incessant honking from skeins of Tundra Swans can be heard as they feed in shallow pools and along the mudflats, while we'll also scan for the range-restricted Swan Goose that can sometimes be present in good numbers.

Watching the cormorant fisherman here with their anxious birds perched on the edge of their wooden boats awaiting their next catch can be quite a thrill; this ancient fishing technique is now genuinely rare as modern netting methods have all but exterminated this tradition.

Mammals are another target here, and whilst boating along the waterways of Poyang Hu, we will look out for Yangtze Finless Porpoises breaking the water's surface. We will also keep an eye out for the 'vampire' Chinese Water Deer, a bizarre ungulate that grows fang-like tusks up to three inches long and has facial muscles allowing them to withdraw these tusks while feeding or to thrust them outwards when fighting!

Of course, the highlight of our visit to this region will be spending time with the elegant Siberian Crane, one of the rarest cranes on earth and now known from only a small handful of remote sites. We will try to locate this beautiful species by their poignant calls across the grasslands and mudflats and then carefully approach to a respectable distance, where congregations and small family groups of sleek white adults occasionally open their wings in display and feed alongside mottled juveniles.



Chinese Penduline Tit by Clayton Burne

Nanjishan National Nature Reserve. Located in another area of the greater Po Yang Hu reserve system, we will specifically target the secretive Marsh Grassbird. Pallas's and Common Reed Bunting are regularly found in the tall grasses, while other birds include swirling flocks of Spotted Redshank



White-naped & Common Cranes by Clayton Burne

and Pied Avocet, Chinese Penduline Tit and Japanese Quail, which can sometimes be seen huddled on the ground. Eurasian Bittern is common here, although well camouflaged, and with diligent scanning, we will search for other goodies such as Baikal Teal, Falcated Duck, and the lovely Smew, including fluffy white-headed males.

Tour Grading & Key

Overall Ease	■ ■ ■	Easy to moderate paced tour. Suitable for most birding interests. Days are mostly cool & quite short, there is no planned night birding. Some early starts, full days in the field.
Birding Ease	■ ■ ■	Easy to moderate. Several rare/difficult species, some low-density species require repeat searches. A personal scope is helpful.
Accommodation	■ ■ ■	Comfortable, more basic in remote areas.
Walking / Trails	■ ■ ■	Some walking, mostly on roads and tracks. Riverside trail on Le An River can be rocky & distance variable depending on where Scaly-sided Mergansers are found.
Vehicles / Roads	■ ■ ■	Mostly good quality roads in a comfortable vehicle. A few long drives.
Photography	■ ■ ■	Good (to very good if weather is suitable). Some purpose-built hides & blinds. Most waterfowl at Pong Yang Hu are reasonably distant. Lighting can be heavily impacted by grey, overcast skies, light fog or drizzle.
Annoyances	■ ■ ■	Some biting insects. Generally cool to very cold, overcast with occasional sunny spells. Expect sub-zero conditions with brisk wind.

Financial Arrangements and Important Notes

Tour dates, prices, single supplement, approximate flight costs and tour spaces are displayed on our website.

Tour inclusions:

- All meals from dinner on day 1 to breakfast on day 15;
- Bottled drinking water;
- All lodgings;
- All ground transportation during the tour;
- All reserve entrance fees;
- All guiding services;
- Tips for local guides, drivers and services.

Tour exclusions:

- Visa fees;
- ANY flights;
- Any beverages (including mini-bar charges at hotels);
- Optional excursions;
- Special gratuities;
- Telephone calls, laundry and other items of a personal nature.

Single Supplement: The single supplement cost for this tour will be charged if you wish to have single accommodation. If RBL cannot provide you with a rooming partner for these nights although you choose to share, the single supplement will become applicable. We will make all reasonable efforts to ensure that a rooming partner is found if you do wish to share.

Tipping: As noted above, gratuities (drivers, hotel staff, restaurants etc.) are included on this tour. However, this does NOT include your Rockjumper leader/s. If you feel that they have given you excellent service, it is entirely appropriate to tip them at your discretion.

- **Due to constantly fluctuating exchange rates, we quote our tours in 4 currencies. The tour price is fixed only in the currency printed in bold, and the actual cost in the other currencies listed will be adjusted according to prevailing exchange rates at the time of final invoicing. The same applies to approximate flight and single supplement rates.**
- **Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registrations, a small group supplement will be offered to confirm the tour.**
- **Tour prices are subject to unforeseen increases in tour related costs and may have to be adjusted as a result.**
- **The designated tour leader/s may be changed at short due to unforeseen circumstances.**
- **The itinerary is indicative only. Changes may need to be made to the order in which the tour is conducted, or some of the venues we visit closer to departure. We will attempt to adhere as close to the original program as possible.**

- This tour is designed to be a comprehensive birding experience, and we will attempt to get good views of as many bird species as possible. Most of the tour is not physically challenging aside from some hikes over rough terrain.
- In some areas it can get very cold (-10°C is not unusual) and could be compounded by high winds.
- Some of the birds are low in density and we should expect full days birding without mid-day breaks to find the maximum variety of species. Critically endangered species such as Spoon-billed Sandpipe are very difficult and may not be found at all.
- This tour does require a good level of fitness and participants should be in good general health as much of the birding will be done on foot and may require walking for several hours at a time.
- Should you have any physical limitations, please notify us in advance of departure.
- We will be well away from modern medical facilities for some of this tour – if you have any medical or physical limitations, please let the Rockjumper office know in advance of the tour.

- Accommodation varies greatly in China, from excellent in the main centres to basic in the more remote areas. Accommodations on this tour are generally of a comfortable standard, but some lodges can be very cold.
- We move accommodation regularly, so the more luggage you pack the less mobile you are. It is thus important for your comfort and ease of travel that you do not over-pack. Kindly stick to 20kg (44lb) for check in luggage and 8kg (+-18lb) for hand luggage.
- Guests who are allergic to bees/other insect bites must carry the necessary medication.

Arrival and Departure Details

The tour will begin with a group transfer from Shanghai to Yancheng on day 1. Please ensure you arrive well in advance of the departure time to ensure there are no delays. The tour will conclude in Shanghai after breakfast on day 15.

The above information in respect of arrivals and departures is a guide only. Precise arrival and departure information will be sent to you in your Tour Confirmation package once the tour has been officially confirmed. If you wish to arrive early and/or depart late and would like assistance in this regard, kindly contact the Rockjumper office.

Shanghai Pudong International Airport, Shanghai (IATA: PVG) is the main port of entry and departure for this tour.

Visa requirements differ by country, nationality of the traveller and duration and purpose of your intended stay. It may be necessary to obtain a visa or an electronic travel authorization in advance of your travel. It is therefore vitally important that you check with your travel agent/consulate/embassy for exact visa requirements.

DO NOT book any flights until the Rockjumper Team have officially confirmed the tour.